

# THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN QUAD: Developing a Balanced Life

## Becoming Socially Mature

### ***Introduction:***

We began our study of a Balanced Christian Life by noting that

***Maturity is a process not an event!***

We have broken the Christian life down into four parts based on Luke 2:52 where it tells us that Jesus, our example, the only perfect person who ever lived developed in four distinct areas of life:

1. In wisdom--*MENTALLY*
2. In stature--*PHYSICALLY*
3. In favor with God--*SPIRITUALLY*
4. In favor with men--*SOCIALLY*

**Today we look at the area of Social Maturity and, of course, the Scriptures have much to say on this subject.**

I have chosen as my key verse for this section Mark 12:31.

Remember the context in Mark 12:28-30?

*... one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'*

Then Jesus continued with the statement in verse 31,

*"The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

We are obviously meant to be social creatures--to love rather than reject our neighbors. Of course the next obvious question is, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus answered that question by telling the parable of the "Good Samaritan" in Luke 10.

What that story makes clear is that our neighbors are not just our family, friends, church contacts, but anyone that God brings across our path who has a need we can righteously meet. According to that teaching they may even be our natural enemies against whom there may be great prejudice.

Sam Shoemaker writes in his book, *Extra Ordinary Living for Ordinary Men*:

*"Withdrawing, retreating Christians are no good, for they do not get near enough to the world to do anything for it. But Christians that succumb to its ways are no good, either; for they are changed by the very world they are supposed to change."*

The answer to this dilemma is, of course, in Romans 12:2. Turn to Romans 12 and keep your finger in that place while I read verse 3 as Philip translated it:

*"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold, but let God remold your minds from within so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity."*

**(Don't lose that place now and we will come back to it shortly.)**

In our social lives, our Associations, Activities, and Actions must be transformed, "remolded" to the plan of God for us.

## **I. ASSOCIATIONS**

A Pastor/Missionary named M. L Fauss once wrote,

*"An author is known by his writings, a fool by his words, and **all** men by their companions!"*

That is a Biblical concept. And in Scripture there are only two types of people in the world, the righteous and the unrighteous. The Scripture make a clear distinction and instruct us in how to associate with each.

### **A. Righteous**

How are we to relate to those who are fellow believers? Continuing on in Romans chapter 12:3-13 helps: **(Read with me.)**

*"For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you **not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think**; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

*And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, {let each exercise them accordingly} : if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality."*

**(Don't lose that place, we're not done yet.)**

Paul confirms this in Philippians 2:2-5 when he says:

*"make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of **mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself**; do not {merely} look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of*

*others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ..."*

What attitude is that? The bond servant attitude. A willingness to give ourselves, even unto the point of death.

## **B. Unrighteous**

Jesus was a very social person. He was obviously comfortable with social outcasts, tax collectors and sinners, lepers and other sick people, or rich and prominent officials.

We tend to stay carefully in our comfort zones and need to expand our circle of influence in order to witness. That is why our church encourage Evangelism Explosion, going to people where they are, and relational evangelism, building friendships and trust to win a hearing.

However, in regard to our interaction with the world, the Bible warns us to be cautious. Why do we need to be on our guard when we interact with those outside of the body?

Because, all of us are influenced to some degree by those with whom we associate and 1 Corinthians 15:33 warns clearly,

*Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."*

Williams translates that verse well,

*"Do not be misled, evil companions corrupt good character."*

Much of Proverbs was written to warn us to avoid close interpersonal relationships with non-believers. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul puts it this way,

*"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?"*

What does Romans 12 have to say? Start with verse 14 and read with me through verse 21 as it starts with problem believers and moves on to our enemies:

*"Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.*

*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*

*Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath {of God,} for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Charles Spurgeon put it this way,

*"Keep the best company. Be with those who are much with God. Let them be the choicest of your companions who have made Christ their choicest companion."*

## II. ACTIVITY

In the Christian life and experience there are actually far fewer restrictions that most people think. One of the main excuses individuals give for not bowing to the Lordship of Christ is that it will make their lives dull and remove their freedom.

Actually life in Christ is the only life of true freedom. Romans 8:2 says,

*"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **has set you free from the law of sin and of death.**"* We were slaves to sin, now we are free to not sin and to live a really exciting life.

Yes there are commands in Scripture, both things we must do and things we must not do, but they are limited to those things that are necessary for life of and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

Just remember that if you obey the clear teaching of Scripture you cannot be a Legalist, you are simply an obedient child of God.

Obedience to the clear commands of Scripture is a moral issue, disobedience is sin. But there are other principles that may not be as simply applied. These we choose to call conscience issues since you must obey your enlightened conscience or you sin. As James 4:17 puts it,

*"Therefore, to one who knows {the} right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin."*

Are there instructions for evaluating these issues?

***There are three guidelines in 1 Corinthians.***

1 Corinthians 6:12 states:

*"All things are lawful for me, but*

***(1) not all things are profitable.***

*All things are lawful for me, but*

***(2) I will not be mastered by anything."***

1 Corinthians 10:23 says:

*"All things are lawful, but*

***(1) not all things are profitable.***

*All things are lawful, but*

***(3) not all things edify."***

In the Greek the word ALL means ALL!

The word used was a common Greek word tied to travel in the Roman Empire. Due to the road system which connected virtually every city and town in the Empire and Pax Romana, the piece enforced by the power of the Roman army, citizens of Rome were **free to travel at will anywhere in the empire.**

1 Corinthians 3:21-23 put it this way:

*"So then let no one boast in men. For **all things belong to you**, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; **all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.**"*

Every system of thought, the world, life, death, things now, things future, ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL! This is complete liberty in Christ.

But liberty brings responsibility as Peter points out in 1 Peter 2:16,

*"{Act} as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but {use it} as bondslaves of God. "*

### **THREE LIMITATIONS TO LIBERTY:**

#### **A. Limitation 1: Progress (Maturity)**

1 Corinthians 6:12 states:

*"All things are lawful for me, but*

***(1) not all things are profitable.***

In our society profit is something that pays off. An investment is of no value unless it is profitable. A business meeting is of no help if it isn't profitable. A relationship is static if it is not profitable.

In Greek it meant to be free to progress on a road. Paul stands at the center of the universe and says all things: art, music, science, literature, games, possessions, food, ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL

***BUT***

Some things do not hasten the journey, some things don't help our progress, to run faster, to be stronger.

***TEST 1: Is this something that aids my development, and helps me***

***run the race and finish the journey God has planned for me?***

#### **B. Limitation 2: Priority (Worship)**

1 Corinthians 6:12 continues:

*All things are lawful for me, but*

***(2) I will not be mastered by anything."***

This is a Greek play on words:

*"All things are in my power, but I will not be under the power of anything."*

or

*"All things are permitted me, but I will not ask permission of any of them."*

Once we are in submission to Christ nothing or no one may become our master. We must keep him "on the throne" of our lives 24/7.

God wants us to put him first. That's not unreasonable.

It's about being God. He owns us by prior claim, by purchase, and by possession. The old truism runs: **"If God is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all."** And like all truisms: that's true!

Money is lawful, but I will not be mastered by money. The rich young man could not bring himself to part with his riches even to follow the Lord of the universe.

Love is lawful, but I will not be mastered by love. Some disciples could not leave their family even to follow the Lord of the universe.

And we haven't even considered addictions, or obsessions, or temptations, or life styles.

***TEST 2: Is this some thing that is becoming my master and exercising an unhealthy influence over my life?***

### **C. Limitation 3: People (Relationships)**

1 Corinthians 10:23 says:

*"All things are lawful, but  
(1) not all things are profitable.*

*All things are lawful, but  
(3) not all things edify."*

The Good Samaritan parable and other Scriptures make it clear we are not just supposed to avoid hurting others, but we are to be working to build them up.

Proverbs 27:17 says it like this:

*"Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another."*

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says,

*"Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.*

The church is a body. If one member is missing then it is crippled and doesn't behave as a body should. It limps and bleeds, it cannot hear, speak, think, breathe, it cannot serve.

This fits very well with Hebrews 10:23-24:

*"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful **and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds**, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging {one another} ; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*

**TEST 3: Is it something that will help others around me grow and to move toward God and Christian maturity?**

So, the development of social maturity includes our choice of those with whom we associate and our choice of life style and activities. But, there is no area of our lives that measures our maturity in this area more than our social consciousness, our living out of the gospel in:

### III. ACTIONS

There is a very interesting verse, 1 Samuel 2:3:

*"Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; **For the LORD is a God of knowledge, And with Him actions are weighed.**"*

In a true sense, "Actions speak louder than words."

As believers we do not have to fear standing before the judgment seat of God and facing the possibility of being cast into hell. There is a judgment of believers however. What is the basis of that evaluation? **Actions are weighed!** Our works will be judged.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 describes this event:

*"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, **each man's work will become evident**; for the day will show it, because it is {to be} revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any **man's work**, which he has built upon it, remains, he shall receive a reward. If any **man's work** is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.*

John Alexander wrote a book titled *Christ the Liberator*. In it he wrote:

*"... there is a difference between character and activity, between being and doing, between attributes and deeds. And it would seem that character, being, and attributes come first.*

*But as we ask God to change our character and make us more like the Lord in our inner being, **the deeds which will then issue from that character will be pleasing to Him**, that is, we will be changed from one degree of glory to another."*

#### A. We Were Created for Good Works.

Why am I here? This is one of the very few questions that sociologists consider to be universal. People, they say want to know who they are and why they even exist.

Christians have definitive answers to both of those questions.

**Who are we?** Ephesians 2:8 and 9 tells us,

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."*

We are children of God, new creatures by the grace of God who gave His Son as a substitute sacrifice for our sin.

**Why are we here?** Ephesians 2:10 tells us,

*"For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**"*

We were actually created to fulfil a pre ordained plan of good works. We were prepared before our birth to be action figures.

The entire context and theme of the Book of Ephesians is that God has an eternal purpose to fulfil through a group of people Paul calls "The Body of Christ." The purpose of this body is to grow up and mature with every members gifted and functioning in order to reach the world with the gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 4:1 and 2 Paul explains it this way,

*"Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and **stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.**"*

## **B. We Worship Through Good Works.**

This, in a sense, takes us back to the beginning. Remember Romans 12:1,

*"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, **{which is} your spiritual service of worship.**"*

Our spiritual act of worship is presenting our bodies to do the perfect will of God. We truly worship, are truly religious when we are doing the Word, not just hearing it. James 1:25 says,

*"But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the {law} of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."*

James goes on in verse 27,

*"This is pure and undefiled religion (or worship) in the sight of {our} God and Father, **to visit orphans and widows in their distress, {and} to keep oneself unstained by the world.**"*

## **C. We Witness to the World By Good Works.**



People tend to be "fruit inspectors." They want a person, especially one who calls himself a Christian to walk the walk. In fact, Jesus expected the world to judge us by our deeds. Matthew 5:16'

*"Let your light shine before men in such a way that **they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**"*

James taught that our witness of works was the proof of the reality of our salvation. In James 2:18 he wrote,

*"But someone may {well} say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.**"*

John got downright excited when he heard of believers walking the walk. Look at 3 John 2-4,

*"Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, {that is,} how you are walking in truth. **I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.**"*

In fact Peter taught that our life style is a protection against false reports. In 1 Peter 2:12 he instructed,

*"**Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe {them,} glorify God in the day of visitation.**"*

But, the bottom line is still our accountability to Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:9 and 10:

*"Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**"*

***I pray that this short study will be a challenge to us to develop a balanced and mature Christian life. We need to mature mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.***

***We need to:***

***"... grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him {be} the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. -- 2Peter 3:18***